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ABSTRACT

The major contention of this paper is that the best way to understand an individual's identity is through the story (or stories) that person makes of his or her life. The research looks at the ways in which the performance of business executives is rooted in both: (1) an executive's unique identity as an individual; and (2) a component of personality called agency. The life story of Dodge Morgan, a former chief executive officer of Controlonics Corporation, who, in 1986, sailed the 60-foot sloop American Promise on a record-breaking, nonstop, solo circumnavigation of the world is the focus of the research. The life story of Dodge Morgan is used to support the argument that identity is a psychological framework for both short-term and long-term goals; that it helps to determine how one approaches both tasks and interpersonal relationships; that it also helps determine the way one copes with stress; and that it has the potential for development over the lifespan, thus affording certain developmental opportunities for the executive. A lengthy bibliography is included. (DB)

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Understanding Executive Performance: A Life-Story Perspective

by
Charles J. Palus
William Nasby
Randolph D. Easton

An exploration of the foundations of leadership in terms of personal identity

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Understanding Executive Performance: A Life-Story Perspective

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October 1991

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Introduction

This paper is about some key psychological aspects of executive performance. Consider the case of an executive and solo sailor.

On April 11, 1986, Dodge D. Morgan sailed the sixty-foot sloop *American Promise* into the harbor at St. George, Bermuda. The fifty-four-year-old Morgan was in remarkably good shape for a man who had just completed a record-breaking, nonstop, solo circumnavigation of the world.

For 150 days Morgan and the *American Promise* had sailed the world's most demanding oceans, including the iceberg-strewn waters forty degrees south in latitude, ringing the Antarctic continent, long-dreaded by merchants and explorers as the "Roaring Forties." Storm after storm rolled over the *American Promise*. The side-rails were buried in water as the boat was repeatedly thrown over seventy degrees from vertical. Morgan also endured the stresses of solitude and stillness. Featureless days of irregular bobbing at times frustrated his forward progress. Morgan logged 25,776 nautical miles; only a handful were in sight of land. Aside from the first and last minutes of the voyage, his only visual contact with humanity was one brief flash from a distant ship's beacon. Yet man and boat persevered, turning hardships into a stunning success, setting a record time for any single-handed circumnavigation of the world by sail, let alone one without stopping along the way (Clarke, 1989). Morgan, a former CEO, performed consistently and remarkably well under the extreme pressures of the voyage, much as he had in his executive function.

This paper is about the ways in which executive performance is rooted in both (1) an executive's unique identity as an individual and (2) a component of personality called *agency*. We will argue that the best way to understand an individual's identity is through the story (or stories) that person makes of his or her life. Thus, we are presenting a life-story perspective of executive performance.

The life story of Dodge Morgan, climaxing with his remarkable voyage,[1] provides an engaging case study for exploring the relationships among identity, personality, and executive performance. Dodge Morgan was for many years a highly successful

executive. His personality profile (Nasby & Easton, 1987) is rather common among executives and thus, to a considerable extent, representative.

But the life-story perspective does not, by definition, limit itself only to the executive-at-work. The psychological dynamics we are interested in here encompass the whole person; indeed, we must engage an understanding of the person across roles, and across the life span, if we are to fully understand the narrower realm of executive performance (Kofodimos, 1990).

Morgan's voyage, we will show, was an integral part of his identity. Morgan the sailor and Morgan the executive are manifestations of an underlying psychological unity.

The value of a close look at Morgan's voyage is also heightened by the fact that long-distance solo sailing highlights several important and comparable aspects of executive work such as achievement, ambition, and individualism; a sense of autonomy and isolation; the need for complex strategic planning, clarity of vision, and quick-footed tactics; and the involvement with rapidly changing, high-stakes situations, limited or overburdened resources, and periods of physical and mental distress.

In this paper, therefore, we will use the case of Dodge Morgan—i.e., his life story/identity, including the story of his voyage, as well as an examination of the role of agency in his personality—to support the hypothesis that looking at the narrative aspects of identity can help one understand important issues around executive personality and executive performance. We will argue that identity (qua life story) is a psychological framework for both short- and long-term goals; that it helps determine how one approaches both tasks and interpersonal relationships; that it also helps determine the way one copes with stress; and that it has the potential for development over the life span, thus affording certain developmental opportunities for the executive.

Our interest in these issues arises from the confluence of two quite different long-term research projects. All three authors of this paper have collaborated in a prospective study (described in more detail below) of the psychological aspects of Dodge Morgan's voyage. Originally focused on the shorter-term impacts of the stresses of the voyage on Morgan, we soon came to see him as an individual living

out a life-long dream, and we became interested in the implications of his pursuit of this dream on both his short- and long-term behavior. The first author (C. J. Palus) of this paper is presently collaborating, at the Center for Creative Leadership, in the research, design, and administration of a whole-life developmental program for executives called APEX (Awareness Program for Executive Excellence; see Kaplan, 1991). In the course of this collaboration it has become clear that Morgan was in many ways a typical executive, even though his drive and ambition have led him into an arena of more personal achievement. Likewise, the executives taking part in APEX tell life stories that often (though not always, and not always effectively) span, integrate, and facilitate the many realms of their lives—including their performance as executives. Although this paper draws explicitly on our research with Morgan, it is also based on insight gleaned from APEX.

We will begin here with a brief presentation of our understanding of the life-story model of identity and of the personality component known as agency—particularly as these relate to executives. We will then apply these ideas to the case of Dodge Morgan, looking first at his life story as a whole and subsequently focusing in detail on the voyage of *American Promise*. Next, we will consider the possibilities for development in identity and personality, as illustrated by our case materials. Finally we will outline the implications of these ideas for executive development programs.

The Life-story Model of Identity

Identity is, simply stated, a personal sense of one's location with respect to the possibilities of life; it is frequently expressed in the form "I am [this]." Often *this* has to do with literal location, such as when we identify (or define) ourselves in terms of where we were born, where we grew up, or where we now live. Likewise, we can "locate" ourselves conceptually, in terms of categories, such as group memberships, career choices, religious affiliation, personality traits, or sexual preference. Identity also conveys possibilities and aspirations: "I someday will be [this]" (Markus, 1977). As Taylor (1990) points out, a positive identity (i.e., one that enables the general sense of "I am good") is an important basis for personal efficacy. The difficulties of self-categorizations along these lines are perhaps most visible during adolescence, in a developmental phenomenon Erikson (1950) has labeled as the "identity crisis." The construction, maintenance, and reconstruction of identity is, however, not limited to youth. Indeed, the loss, impoverishment, or absence of the means to locate oneself in such a manner at any point in the life span has the potential to generate great despair, as sometimes manifested during, for example, job loss or divorce.

Identity is a basis for executive performance in both the short and long term. In the former, identity supports the day-to-day engagement and execution of complex and stressful tasks—an idea we will return to in detail when we discuss the voyage of *American Promise*.

Identity also supports executive performance over a much longer time frame, in terms of the creation of what Levinson (1978) refers to as an *occupational legacy* and others have labeled *generativity*—realizing the full productive, creative potential of adulthood (Erikson, 1950, 1982).[2] Kotre (1984) defines generativity as "investing one's substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self" (p. 10). We contend that for executives, identity can be a long-term means of generating substantial "products," in the sense of having one's career recognized (by oneself and others) as fruitful and valuable.

If identity is indeed important to executive performance, we need to know how to recognize "an identity." That is, we need to

know more about the ways individuals represent and "play back" their identities, to themselves and other people.

The most obvious way this identification can be accomplished is through literal self-categorization, through declarative statements in the form of "I am [this]" and "I will be [this]."

Such a means of identity portrayal is not uncommon, but there is another, more fundamental, and ultimately more efficacious, way of representing and playing back one's identity. Following a growing number of theorists and researchers, we believe that a primary way in which people represent their identities is in the form of stories (Alexander, 1988; Bruner, 1986, 1987; Kotre, 1984; McAdams, 1990; Shank, 1991; Vitz, 1990). The most detailed and empirically tested narrative model of identity has been put forth by McAdams (1985, 1988a, 1988b, 1989, 1990). We will draw from his work on the *life-story model of identity* rather extensively as we develop our ideas.

The life-story model of identity is doubly biographical (McAdams, 1990). Like other biographical approaches to understanding people, it holds the objective history of the individual up to interpretive examination. In addition, this model presents the individual as an active autobiographer, one who weaves the circumstances of his or her own life into a serial narrative, or "life story," replete with scripts, scenes, symbols, dramatic twists, themes, fictions, revisions, and a cast of characters, starring—often in multiple roles and in divergent stories—one's self. Versions of the story are told to oneself and to others. (The possibilities of multiple, or transient, versions of "the" life story bespeak the multiplicities of identity.) This dynamic life story, in all its vicissitudes, serves as a rich, but more-or-less manageable, internal model of "who I was, who I am (and why), and who I might become"—more precisely, an identity.

It would perhaps be enough for our purposes that individuals often behave "as if" their identities are structured as stories. In fact, there is a growing body of theory and empirical evidence supporting the idea that narrative per se is an essential mode for assimilating, representing, and using self-relevant information, including identity.

Jerome Bruner, in reviewing some of this evidence, proposes two qualitatively different, but basic, modes of human cognition:

propositional thinking and narrative thinking (Bruner, 1986, 1987). The former organizes information according to abstraction, categorization, and facts and rules largely divorced from specific contexts. The latter organizes information "narratively," that is, along the lines of interpersonal interactions in specific situations over time, within a context of cultural mores. Bruner points out that scientific paradigms have traditionally overextended the range of proper roles for propositional thinking. In actuality, human cognitive processes have evolved to make narrative accountings (i.e., stories) of the social world of relationships, meanings, roles, events, diverse contexts, emotions, goals, and values.

According to Bruner, narrative thinking develops alongside propositional thinking as a child learns to use language in making sense of his or her place in the social world. These two modes of cognition parallel well-known distinctions between left- and right-brain hemispheric function, with "left-brain thinking" (or what could be called propositional thinking) likewise overemphasized in our culture, as well as in our behavioral sciences (Vitz, 1990). Other theorists have recently asserted the importance of understanding the underexplored narrative basis of cognition in the psychological disciplines of memory (Neisser, 1982), moral development (Gilligan, 1982; Vitz, 1990), social cognition (Cantor, 1990), self-concept (Gergen & Gergen, 1986; Markus, 1977), and psychotherapy (Schafer, 1981; Spence, 1982).

We are not, however, arguing that identity is exclusively narrative. It is likely that both narrative and propositional modes of cognition are used to subjectively represent identity, with the dominance of one or the other depending upon conditions as yet unknown to us. Kotre (1984), in collecting life stories for his study of generativity, encountered the propositional versus narrative distinction with respect to the way people speak of their lives. At one extreme were "narrators" who answered every question about themselves with "a web of meaning . . . consisting of stories. At the other extreme are those who interpret their lives with analysis" (p. 27). The latter form of identity expression is manifest as statements of the general form "I am [this]"; that is, as abstract, affectively dry categories.

McAdams' (1990) complete life-story model of identity consists of nine elements (see the appendix to this paper for a description of all these elements). An analysis using the entire model is beyond the scope of the present article. We will concentrate on two elements that we believe have the most relevance to executives: script and life review.

A *script* outlines the main story-line (i.e., the general interplay of events, characters, and themes) of the person's identity, with respect to what *has* happened as well as what *could* happen to that person (see also Berne, 1964). One of the most desirable functions of a script (or scripts, since there are typically more than one) is to outline in dramatic form what it means for an individual to be generative (productive, creative) in adulthood.

Along similar lines, Levinson (1978) speaks of the important role of "the Dream" in guiding adult aspirations:

> A man's Dream is his personal myth, an imagined drama in which he is the central character. . . . It has the quality of a vision, an imagined possibility that generates excitement and vitality. At the start it is poorly articulated and only tenuously connected to reality. . . . It may take a dramatic form as in the myth of a hero [or] it may take mundane forms that are yet inspiring and sustaining. . . .
>
> Whatever the nature of his Dream, a young man has the developmental task of giving it greater definition and finding ways to live it out. . . . If the Dream remains unconnected to his life it may simply die, and with it his sense of aliveness and purpose. (pp. 91-92, 246)

The script is a way of "believing in one's self." Where such beliefs are felt as congruent with actual work- and family-life, they lead to a sense of vitality and commitment. An alternative—when the script is abdicated, left undefined, or uncritically "borrowed" from somebody else's story—is stagnation: a disconnectedness of one's identity from one's work, and an essential lack of commitment to the tasks at hand (Erikson, 1982).

The desire to produce something of recognized value out of one's unique life—to be generative, in Erikson's (1950) terms—is at

the heart of executive experience, yet is often vaguely scripted within an individual. Often, such desires are stated solely in a dry, propositional fashion, in terms of terse objectives. The heroic achievements symbolized, for example, by the "corner office" or the "top of the ladder" are often vigorously sought by executives but poorly understood in terms of the stories of their own identities. Levinson points out that the processes of unfolding the meanings of a Dream and living out these meanings can be difficult. Much work can be required to clarify, revise, or even give up parts of a Dream; such revisions, often painful, are frequently felt as a "life-crisis."

The process of making the life story explicit, deepening the story, and revising elements of the story is referred to as *life review* (McAdams, 1990). We view the concept of life review as central to identity transition. What it boils down to is this: There are periods of heightened opportunity during the adult life span for confronting one's identity and for making minor or major revisions within one's life story/identity.

In our view the periods of heightened opportunity for life review consist of two types, which we refer to as *experiential* and *seasonal*. The two categories are not exclusive. With respect to the first, people from time to time have experiences that provide a substantially new look at themselves. This new look may be felt, for example, as an epiphany (an "a-ha! experience") or it might be at the level of a traumatic experience, in which the sense of self is deeply, even painfully, shaken. Analytically speaking, we would say that the experience is disconfirming of an aspect of identity (Kaplan, 1990) and provides data, or the "lessons of experience" (McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988), for a new way of looking at one's self. Narratively speaking—that is, according to the life-story model of identity—we would say that the person incorporates a dramatic twist into the life story, in the form of a new script, a new episode, or even a whole new chapter of the story. It is important to note that just encountering some impactful experience is not enough; the experience must be reflectively worked into the life story such that the story, and identity, is revised or redirected. McCall et al. (1988) have identified experiences implicated in both minor and major "lessons" in the particular context of executive work life. Palus (1990) provides a broader review of types of experiences implicated in precipitating major life transitions.

Life review that is seasonally motivated, on the other hand, refers to the idea that certain periods of the life span, as measured by age, are natural times for life review.[3] For example, Butler (1963) first used the term *life review* to refer to the kind of reminiscence about identity that naturally occurs in old age, after the productive years are fully spent.

Of particular interest to us here is the idea that there is a potential seasonal identity transition, and opportunity for life review, around entering what Jung (in Hoy, 1984) referred to as the second half of life (very roughly, after age forty). Much has been written about the nature of this "midlife" transition (e.g., Jaques, 1965; Levinson, 1978; Neugarten, 1965); we will confine ourselves to two phenomena that have direct relevance to identity transitions.

First, midlife has been understood as the beginning of a natural time for culmination of the script.[4] For many it is when achievement of the Dream is right at hand or when the Dream is recognized as essentially unobtainable. Quite often, it is also a time when reminders of one's physical mortality become pressing. This is a time of self-confrontation, of life review; according to Levinson (1978):

> If a man has largely attained his goals, he asks: "What good are they? Of what value are my accomplishments to others, to society, and especially to myself? What are the costs? Where do I go from here?" If he has failed in significant respects, he asks: "Is the failure irrevocable or can I achieve what I wanted? Can I accept the failure and live without the things success might have brought? What are the alternatives—can I find a better way of living for the coming years?" (pp. 248-249)

Second, the season of midlife has been identified, by a growing body of theory and empirical evidence (Gutmann, 1987; Kegan, 1982; Levinson, 1978; Vaillant, 1977), as a potential transition period when certain personality traits are susceptible to change. These changes, for men, are manifest as a turning away from individual achievement and psychological separateness and turning toward a (partial) integration of one's identity with those of others, submerging a certain amount of individuality in return for the

shared benefits of more intimate relationships. For women, there is some evidence of a potential for transition in the reverse direction. In the following section, we will define these sets of personality traits as *agency* and *communion*, respectively.

Agency as a Hallmark of Executive Personality

The term *agency* was coined by the theologian David Bakan (1966) to describe a fundamental theme of human motivation: Agency is the drive for self-assertion, self-protection, and self-expansion. Wiggins (in press) has pointed out that the concept of agency is superordinate to a number of motives, traits, or behavioral patterns that have been proposed by psychological theorists over the years, including striving for superiority (Adler, 1912), competition (the "moving against" of Horney, 1937), the needs for power and achievement (McClelland, 1970), the psychosocial task of autonomy (Erikson, 1950), self-differentiation (Kegan, 1982), and psychological masculinity (Bem, 1974). A dictionary definition is also instructive: *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* defines agency as "the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power."

A growing body of research supports the intuitive notion that a constellation of traits, motives, and behaviors based on agency is prototypical of executives. Executives have been shown in this research (as cited in Kaplan, 1989) to be typically "socially ascendant and self-confident, persuasive and self-assured, aggressive in moving into a central role, confident, flexible, catching on rapidly, moving into action with energy" (Bentz, 1986, p. 32). They are also typically desirous of "power, fame, and financial reward" (Hogan, Raskin, & Fazzini, 1990, pp. 343-354). Executives, according to Kaplan (1989, 1990) tend to be "expansive" in their personalities, that is, putting a premium on achievement, self-assertion, and a distinct and separate—and very often heroic and glorified—sense of self, frequently at the expense of intimate relationships.

Agency is a two-edged sword. On the positive side it is almost synonymous with success in complex task definition and execution (the job of "executives"). The attributes of being tough when necessary and being able to use power are examples of abilities that predict executive career success (McCall et al., 1988).

There is a clear downside to an excess of agency. A line of balance can be crossed into behavior that is hyperactive, impatient, callous, insensitive, arrogant, overly confident, self-serving, and

overly ambitious (Kaplan, 1989; Kofodimos, 1989). These traits can potentially lead to career derailment in executives (McCall & Lombardo, 1983). Time spent nurturing family and friends often suffers (Kofodimos, 1984, 1989), leading to the not-uncommon scenario of a derailed executive without an appreciative family or social network to fall back on. Finally, certain configurations of agentic drives have been correlated to stress-related illness, such as, for example, the link between "Type-A personality" (which involves high competitiveness, impatience, extreme time urgency, and hostility) and heart disease (Friedman & Rosenman, 1959).

Bakan (1966), however, posited agency as but one of a pair of fundamental themes of human motivation. *Communion* is the complement of agency and refers to the condition of being a part of a larger social or spiritual entity, manifested in a desire for intimacy, affiliation, and integration with that larger entity. Communion is the subsuming of the self, rather than its expansion. Communion is, for example, inclusive of Bem's (1974) concept of psychological femininity. McAdams and Vaillant (1982) found that intimacy motive scores (i.e., communion) obtained from male Harvard graduates at age thirty were positively correlated with composite ratings of psychosocial adjustment (including career advancement and marital satisfaction) made seventeen years later.

Communion is one of two factors having gained consensus among researchers as forming the psychological basis for interpersonal behaviors (Leary, 1957; Wiggins, in press); agency is the other. Communion is also, along with agency, widely posited as one of five universal (across cultures), relatively enduring (within individuals) personality factors (Leary, 1957; McCrae, 1989; Peabody & Goldberg, 1989; Wiggins, in press).

Freud's pithy response when he was asked the secret of well-being was "to love and to work," a prescription for balance between communion and agency. There is evidence that this kind of balance is important to executive functioning: Executives who avoid derailment typically have a measure of humility, compassion, and sensitivity toward others and can function well in teams (McCall & Lombardo, 1983).

Identity and Agency in Dodge Morgan's Life Story

Let us now turn to our case material—Dodge Morgan's life story—to further explore these ideas of identity and agency (and communion), and their relationship to performance.

The representation of any life-story material is an interpretive act, subject to editorial biases—even when the story is "direct from the horse's mouth" (Denzin, 1989). The following presentation (in this and later sections) follows as closely as possible the repeated emphases Morgan used in telling his story to us, to journalists, to prospective boat-designers, to himself (in his personal log), and to the public (in his autobiography). Our overall impression of these emphases has been one of consistency.

Let us start with the identity Morgan had drawn of himself about eighteen months before the voyage, one in which he located himself and identified himself to others. The following autobiographical excerpts were written by Morgan under the heading "The Skipper Presented," included as part of a document entitled "Owner's Specifications for a Single-handed Sailboat" (see Morgan, 1989, pp. 191-210). This document was prepared as he was soliciting proposals for the design and construction of *American Promise*. The purpose of the document was to inform potential boat-builders about "who I am," so a boat especially suited to his needs could be designed.

> *Physical and Mental State.* I am, in 1984, 52 years old, born 1/15/32 in Malden, Massachusetts. . . . I flew fighter airplanes in the U.S Air Force from 1952 to 1957, graduated second in my Aviation Cadet class, and accumulated 1,010 flying hours. I was booted out of the University of New Hampshire for not earning enough good grades to compensate for being caught in the act of firing a cannon in the Dean of Women's bedroom while she slept. I graduated from Boston University, magna cum laude, in 1959. In my post-military careers, I have worked for "someone else" for just a total of four years. I had a successful three-year business in Anchorage, Alaska, which paid for my first schooner [*Coaster*] and two and one half years of sailing her. I founded

and ran Controlonics Corp., an electronics products manufacturer, for thirteen years until selling the company to Dynatech Corp. in 1983; Controlonics grew from four people in a garage to a very profitable, high-tech company with $26 million in sales in that period. . . .

I suffer from cluster-type, migraine headaches that can . . . often be controlled by vigorous, physical exercise when the pain hits. Even in the most severe cycle, however, I can continue to function relatively well, and the combination of immediate, strenuous exercise, some "mind over matter," and a reasonably high threshold for pain allows me to cope with a headache in progress at critical times. . . .

My coordination is still quite good; I was a competitive athlete in several sports when young. . . . I really need an average of eight hours of sleep a day but can grab it in short segments, can remain alert over a 24-hour period, and can store sleep. . . .

I have a strong will and a singular determination to succeed. I do not easily give up. I can concentrate well over long periods of time and can focus a natural impatience on realistic objectives, satisfied with inches of progress if that is the order of the day or task. I know how to sort priorities and do not become confused by too many details. . . . I am very happy in my own company and can find loneliness a rather delicious feeling.

Sailing Experience. I have experienced being at sea for extended periods of time while sailing *Coaster* from Maine to Alaska, 1963-65, either short-handed or alone. That was my first significant and is my most extensive sailing experience, although I've been "messing around in boats" all of my life. *Coaster* taught me as I sailed. . . . I was totally immersed in the adventure, as is my way for whatever I'm doing, and I never slept ashore for the two and a half years it took. . . .

Although competitive by nature, I have not actively raced sailboats. I think "covering" [a conservative racing tactic] is

> boring. Putting me in a seven-knot crowd around a mark is like putting a mackerel in a tree. . . . I think I can rough-jury-rig almost anything to keep it going. . . .
>
> My sailing skills, health, or mental preparedness should not be a barrier to a successful solo, nonstop circumnavigation. (pp. 199-202)

Represented here is an identity strongly affected by agency. Themes of independence, self-assertion, and mastery are strong: Morgan does not like to work for someone else and prefers to sail short-handed or alone. Morgan presents himself here as determined, competitive, controlling, resourceful, impatient but well-focused and prone to total immersion in a task.

Note as well the absence, indeed the contradiction, of communion motive themes in his story. No mention is made of his first wife, who was with him much of the time aboard *Coaster* (and from whom he was divorced soon after), nor his present (second) wife and two young children. His present family was in fact quite sour on the idea of his adventure at this point in the planning. No mention is made of teachers, mentors, or teams. Loneliness is described as "delicious."

Quite striking here is Morgan's use of his identity in such a highly explicit and instrumental way. That is, Morgan has written this particular piece so that his task (more precisely here, his boat) might be designed to fit his "self" like hand in glove. His task and identity epitomize the predominance of agency over communion—although in view of the danger involved in this case, he seems wise to have sought to match his identity and his task so closely and deliberately.

We now examine an especially potent element of Morgan's life story with respect to agency: his script. "The Skipper Presented" glosses over the underlying script of Morgan's life story, but it is powerfully and repeatedly revealed in other writings and interviews.

The single word *promise* embodies the essence of Dodge Morgan's most prominent script. The original name of his boat was simply *Promise*, the name deliberately standing for "a promise that I knew I had to keep." He had made a vow when he sold his boat *Coaster* in 1965, a vow that was to remain very much alive over the

next twenty years, that he would someday make "a very significant sail alone with a boat built specifically for the job." The voyage of *American Promise* thus represented for Morgan the best of his productive, creative, unique, and personal adult capacity; it was the dream that scripted his identity and thus shaped his agency.

Morgan says *promise* is one of his favorite words:

> As we live our lives, we tend to make promises to each other and to ourselves. I tend to like people who keep their promises and I like myself better when I keep them to myself.

Morgan's promise was a source of vision that infused his business career, his family life, and, of course, his goals in the personal realm.

Morgan's daughter is named Kimberly Promise Morgan.

His promise gave his entrepreneurial efforts at Controlonics Corporation a sense of purpose. It was obviously going to take a fair amount of money to custom-build the boat of his dreams; he had few qualms about selling the business at the peak of its success in order to realize his superordinate goal.

With his vow in 1965, Morgan had outlined a script encompassing the desired "products" of his adulthood. Morgan was in fact aware of an alternative possible script at that point, one with a quite different set of outcomes: "I was on the verge of being a boat bum, and afraid of ending up old and alone in some harbor." This other script was terrifying to the thirty-three-year-old man, and its specter made him temporarily leave the sea for a more traditional career and a family, while promising to return.

The script has origins in childhood and adolescence, as a collection of compelling images (McAdams, 1990) gradually coalescing to convey a "vague sense of self-in-adult-world" (Levinson, 1978, p. 91). Morgan was twelve when he was first given jobs in his uncle's boatyard in Harwich Port, Massachusetts. He worked alongside his brother and his grandfather ("my male role models") and learned their "athletic, competent, headstrong, and hell-raising" ways of manhood. He learned to love sailing:

> From an early age, I was surrounded by boats I could not use. . . . I spent a great deal of time . . . watching others sail off and wishing I could. I used my boatyard pay to rent a small catboat an hour's walk up the coast, and what I loved most about sailing was to go alone beyond the tether. And the tether grew longer as I grew older and more experienced. The seeds of solo sailing were planted deep. (Morgan, 1989, pp. 16-17)

We have been emphasizing an empowering clarity as demonstrated by Morgan's "promise," with its consequent function of shaping his agency throughout his adulthood. We will continue to emphasize these empowering features of Morgan's identity as we focus on the voyage itself. First, a synopsis of the voyage is in order.

A Synopsis of the Voyage of *American Promise*

The voyage of Dodge Morgan on the *American Promise* is exceptionally well documented. Morgan and his wife, Manny (who was instrumental in the planning of the voyage), approached us in the fall of 1984, twelve months before his departure date. We agreed to provide a psychological perspective to their planning process, in return for the unique opportunity to collect extensive data before, during, and after the voyage.

One part of our method involved an extensive, ongoing psychometric evaluation of Morgan (Nasby & Easton, 1987). A prevoyage assessment was made of his personality, emotional stability, and cognitive-performance levels. He was also asked to complete one instrument per day during the voyage: a repeating cycle of psychometric tests (previously sealed by us into dated, waterproof packets) designed to assess any changes in these areas.[5]

The other part of our method involved the collection and interpretation of biographical documents. Interviews were conducted with Morgan (by us, as well as by numerous journalists) and with his family. Morgan kept an extensive personal log during the voyage (which we quote from frequently in this paper) and has published an autobiographical account of the voyage and its preparations (Morgan, 1989). In addition, his boat was equipped by filmmaker Chris Knight with six super-8mm sound-equipped cameras, both automatically and manually triggered, mounted in waterproof housings above and below deck. A one-hour film documentary has been produced from the nine hours of film thus exposed (Knight, 1986).

American Promise was designed by Ted Hood, the noted America's Cup yacht designer, who was selected after a careful search. Morgan himself, however, was the grand architect of the boat; for example, he pressed successfully to keep the vessel at a relatively heavy displacement that would be slower than alternative, lighter designs but would give an edge of seaworthiness in the hands of a fifty-three-year-old man.

The most reliable design systems were incorporated with few limitations on cost (Morgan had sold his share of the electronics

business for $41 million) or weight, including redundancy in power, navigation, life-support and communications systems. *American Promise* carried three independent generators, two water makers, three autopilot steering systems, and four mainsails. Provisions for personal comfort were more than adequate; hot showers were available, and he took a large number of books. Over 1,600 pounds of food, enough for at least 290 days, was organized into a 21-day cycle of pretested menus. Morgan quipped that if he ran aground, he would not need rescue but would set up as a powerplant, general store, and lending library (Ulrich, 1985).

The route of the voyage and its timing were determined in consultation with Bob Rice of the National Weather Service. Morgan pored over the data and literature available—navigational, meteorological, and historical—about the conditions that could be expected, and the choices available. A facsimile receiver was installed for reception of satellite weather maps. Other navigation equipment included radar, sonar, and a satellite navigator, all with backups. The voyage was planned to begin from Morgan's home port of Portland, Maine, and to finish in Bermuda. The circumnavigation route was toward the east, and south of the capes of the southern continents, taking advantage of the prevailing winds and currents in the Southern ocean. Morgan planned to traverse the Southern Hemisphere primarily during its December-March summer season. He had the number 211 stitched onto the mainsail (his estimate of the length of the voyage), a record time if achieved.

Morgan chose an ambitious schedule for designing and building the boat, and he pursued it with the combined savvy of a businessman and sailor:

> We selected May 1, 1985, as the launch date for this not-yet-designed sailboat. The skeptics howled. They were silenced on a high tide on May 7, 1985, when *American Promise* hit the water for sea trials just six days late. (Morgan, 1989, p. 23)

The voyage had what proved to be a false start on October 14, 1985. Morgan was immediately plagued with the failure of critical gear, including all three of his autopilots. He also had to climb the mast—a dangerous task he had hoped to avoid at any point in the

voyage—in order to retrieve a broken halyard. He had to put into Bermuda for repairs and restart the voyage from there.

With his equipment problems fixed, Morgan departed Bermuda without fanfare, just as summer in the Southern ocean was coming to a close. With the autopilots now doing their job, there was ample time to sleep and read. He was able to avoid the worst of Hurricane Kate during his first week out with only a slight delay in his forward progress.

His schedule included a thorough inspection of the boat twice a day. A troubling degree of wear and tear soon became apparent. It would concern him throughout the voyage.

Radio contacts with Bob Rice, his weather consultant in Bedford, Massachusetts; with his family in Maine; and with numerous ham radio operators occurred regularly. A navigational fix was taken each noon.

Christmas eve (day 43) was celebrated with popcorn, beer, and presents stowed by family and friends.[6] Christmas day brought the first Southern ocean storm, 420 nautical miles south of the tip of Africa:

> The motion is amusement park caliber and the racket of gear caroming around in lockers is deafening. Nothing stays in one place, including me, but I hang on. . . . The gray sky opens and pours gray rain over the gray sea. I could be color-blind and the view would be just the same. (Morgan, 1989, pp. 96-97)

Morgan arrived at this first major checkpoint, the Cape of Good Hope, on December 26, a record pace for a solo circumnavigation and well ahead of his own estimate. Having thus completed the first quarter of the voyage, he reported satisfaction with, and a sense of relief at, the soundness of both himself and his boat.

American Promise then entered the heart of the voyage, the infamous "Roaring Forties" latitudes of the Indian and Southern oceans. The wind and ocean currents of those latitudes are uninterrupted by land masses all the way east to Cape Horn of South America and are among the fiercest in the world. Day 48 brought more storms and high seas, including 50-foot waves and horizontal

knockdowns, in which the vessel was thrown completely onto its side. Morgan writes of this period in his personal log, day 51:

> The relentlessness of this violent rolling motion demands a tough constitution. There is no respite, no haven, except in the sturdiness of the mind in its goal to ignore the ceaseless motion. It has been going on for days. It is not unlike the torture that achieves its end by repeating over and over a starkly uncomfortable act. It is easy to see a man losing his mind if he loses his ability to see and understand that it will end. It will end. It will end. (Morgan, 1989, p. 99)

On day 52, Morgan notices a colony of goose-necked barnacles growing just beneath the water line. The thought crosses his mind that they detract from his speed and he impulsively goes after them with a putty knife:

> My arm and face dip in and out of the freezing water as I chip and scrape. Then the boat takes a lurch, my boots slip on the ladder rung, and my feet fly. Suddenly I am looking up at *Promise*'s stern—it is five feet away and departing, a stupefying sight. . . . Then, almost as if *Promise* understands my predicament, her sails luff and she stands straight up in front of me. Then I can haul myself back to her and climb the boarding ladder. . . . And I remember being told how even a strong man cannot pull himself upstream on his lifeline through a six-knot wake fully dressed. (Morgan, 1989, p. 104)

The danger of *Promise* colliding with something was also a concern; Morgan was well within the iceberg zone of the Southern ocean. On day 64, he was startled by a collision which nearly stopped the boat:

> The force of it rolls me into a bundle on the bulkhead forward of the bunk. . . . A whale. I must have hit a whale. (Morgan, 1989, p. 112)

Boat speed, however, immediately resumed, and no damage was apparent.

The possibility of equipment failure remained an ever-present concern. Morgan was constantly replacing or repairing worn equipment. Ominous cracks running up the mast were, upon inspection, only paint deep (day 47). A failed halyard at the jib-sail peak needed five frightening hours of repair high above the decks (day 67) and continued to cause problems.

Morgan passed just south of Tasmania on day 76 and was halfway home.

On day 78, he was advised by Ted Hood to make for a safe anchorage in New Zealand, to make repairs to the chronically troublesome halyards and furling gear. He refused. Bermuda was his goal,

> burned into my brain as resolutely as if it were my spawning pool and I were a king salmon. (Morgan, 1989, p. 124)

There followed a surprisingly calm period, with light or no wind, the longest such period of the voyage. This calm was the most distressful part of the voyage. The word *calm* is not entirely descriptive. In the light and variable winds,

> the sheets slacken and then snap taut, whipping the sails in epileptic violence. The wear and tear on gear is inexorable. The wear and tear on me is even worse. . . .
>
> We sail 180 feet per hour, a rate of eight tenths of a mile per day, taking us back to Bermuda thirty-eight years from now. . . .
>
> Alone we sit in the middle of the ocean, eleven thousand miles from our destination, powerless, like a sick, old man with a broken cane abandoned in an endless desert. (personal log, day 87; Morgan, 1989, pp. 140-141)

The calm finally ended in a welcome gale. Cape Horn of South America—long feared by sailors as the anvil to the Southern ocean's hammer—was rounded on day 109, with great exuberance, in clear daylight and fair wind.

The rest of the voyage was anticlimactic. Forward progress north was, at times, hard-won, and extended beating into the wind was required. *American Promise* crossed her own outbound tracks on day 146. Morgan finished in Bermuda on April 11, 1986, after 150 days—a new world-record time (Clarke, 1989).

Identity, Agency, and Performance: The Voyage of *American Promise*

We will now consider the roles of identity and agency in Morgan's performance of the tasks of the voyage. In particular, we will consider the stressful aspects of these tasks, and the ways in which Morgan coped with these potential stressors.

Environmental Stressors

As we have pointed out, agency can be a two-edged sword. The potential negative aspects of agency include the prolonged engagement of high levels of stress and the depletion of personal (physical, social, and psychological) resources in the name of hard work. The results can be debilitating, including, for example, exhaustion, anxiety, cardiac distress, and ulcers. The similarity between Morgan's voyage and the executive function thus extends to the potentially stressful aspects of each realm. What can be learned here about the effective channeling of agency in ways that avoid debilitation? What makes a person durable under stress?

When Dodge and Manny Morgan first invited us to conduct research based on his upcoming voyage, they also asked us (quid pro quo) for our informed opinions about the psychological difficulties he might face. A review of the literature was not encouraging. There have been three systematic studies of solo sailors conducted during competitive transoceanic races (Bennet, 1973; Kniesley & Grant, 1985; Lewis, Harries, Lewis, & de Monchaux, 1964), and there are numerous anecdotal accounts or case reports regarding solo, long-distance sailing (Bennet, 1974, 1983; Bombard, 1953; Day & McCormick, 1983; Merrien, 1954; Pickthall, 1983; Tomalin & Hall, 1970). The most striking feature common to these reports is the high degree of psychological risk involved. Participants frequently encountered episodes of profound psychological distress, including severe fatigue, hallucinations, cognitive disintegration, depression, loneliness, fear, anxiety, and anger—including two documented cases of suicide. Another solo sailor likened the environment to solitary confinement with the chance of drowning.

One of our research goals, then, was to find out which stressors, if any, would have a negative psychological impact on Morgan. Because he completed a psychometric test instrument each day during the voyage (with occasional interruptions), as part of a cycle of tests designed to measure his emotional states and cognitive performance levels, distress could be detected as unusual levels of depression, anger, hostility, anxiety, confusion, lack of confidence, and reduced speed and accuracy in cognitive abilities.

By these measures Morgan suffered three distinct episodes of psychological distress. The principal origin of the distress was the same in each episode, and this offers us insight into performance in challenging situations. These episodes of distress, it is important to point out, were not related to dramatic events or crises (i.e., violent weather, falling overboard, or hitting a "large object") or to physical fatigue or feelings of loneliness. Rather, they were each related to periods of blocked forward progress. Nothing was more stressful to Morgan than not making headway toward his goal and not being able to change that condition. Dramatic events, of kinds usually thought of as stressful, seemed to bring out the best in Morgan; he was, in fact, highly successful in preventing such events from damaging his rate of progress.

The etiology of Morgan's periods of distress is rooted in his extreme agency, and we can recognize his syndrome among executives more generally. Individual action resulting in mastery of a situation is typical of agency. The inability to solve a problem through direct and forceful action can be most stressful, even disabling, to an agentically oriented individual. Morgan craved for a competitor or an enemy to attack. Stress for Morgan—and, we believe, for executives—lies less in combat with the elements of a situation than in an absence of combat. Lack of movement, with no discernible way to inch forward, is a stressor far worse than a system breakdown, a violent storm (be it managerial or meteorological), or any crisis that can be confronted by some positive action or force of will. In Morgan's own words:

> A storm, as frightening as it often is, can somehow be dealt with by actions. The calm sets my nerves right on edge. (personal log, day 87; Morgan, 1989, p. 140)

The first episode of distress stemmed from his false start and overlapped the restart of the voyage. When he left Bermuda to begin again, Morgan was markedly depressed, anxious, and lacking in confidence:

> I am very tentative. It was very close that I am, in fact, back underway on this voyage, and I am not absolutely certain yet that I should be, only that I must be. The reality of it all is thrust at me and I am intimidated, somewhat afraid. . . . I am sleepy all the time and it takes a major effort to attack the chores I must accomplish. (personal log, day 2; Morgan, 1989, p. 62)

Another period of emotional distress occurred near the end of the voyage, in the weeks before his arrival in Bermuda. Morgan was forced to sail into the wind, day after day, inching his way north at a time when his destination was finally in reach.

> We head west, some forty degrees off course. . . . Little voices jabber in the back of my awareness: "Come on, let us through, we've paid our dues," says one. Says the other: "You are never paid up on those kinds of dues." (personal log, day 145)

> I am barely holding my temper at bay, only because I have nothing reasonable to choose as a target for my anger. This is simply more dues. . . . I am truly sick and tired of this. (personal log, day 148)

The worst episode of distress occurred just after the midpoint of the voyage, during an extended period of becalming half-way across the Southern ocean. Where he had expected a blasting tailwind, characteristic of the "Roaring Forties," he found instead a glassy calmness. This condition, with some teasing bursts of wind, lasted for well over a week. At one point he was even drifting backwards. Our psychological test instruments registered Morgan as depressed, anxious, tired, hostile, and unconfident, as well as diminished in cognitive skill and speed. In his own words:

> I am under high tension. I hunt for any whiff of breeze, not only with my eyes but with my very soul. . . . I hold my breath to help me anticipate any cat's paw of a breeze and to feel the slightest change in the boat's motion. At least once per hour I let go, vent the pressure to scream curses into the west. And then I tense up again. . . . At midnight I give up the struggle to brood. (personal log, day 87; Morgan, 1989, p. 141)

The connection between progress and depression becomes more obvious when the calm breaks for a while:

> Glory be I am healed, the spirit is whole again. All it takes is twelve hours of sailing on a steady wind. . . . [The] skies are broken by blue, and I am going home. (personal log, day 89; Morgan, 1989, p. 143)

An Effective Coping Style: Psychological Hardiness

On the whole, Morgan weathered the stressors of the voyage rather well. He showed few of the symptoms of profound distress reported in the literature for solo long-distance sailors and suffered no long-term ill effects from the voyage.

We believe that Morgan's style of coping was largely responsible for his robust endurance in the face of multiple stressors. The effectiveness of his coping style is based on its compatibility with both his own identity and his high level of agency. It is a coping style that is, in fact, congruent with one identified by extensive research with executives as effective in mitigating the potential physical and mental ill-effects of stressors. Maddi and Kobasa (1984) followed 259 executives from Illinois Bell for up to nine years, tracking episodes of illness, as well as stressful life events, and studying the possible buffering effects (between stressful life events and illness) of personality, attitudes, and behavior. A personality style called *hardiness* was shown in this research to be a powerful buffer against the debilitating effects of stressful life events.

Hardiness consists of three enduring attitudinal components: *Control* is the tendency to believe and act as if one can influence the course of stressful events; *commitment* is the finding of a sense of self and purpose in stressful events; and *challenge* is the embracing of stressful events as necessary for continued growth and development. The antitheses of control, commitment, and challenge are (respectively) powerlessness, alienation, and threat (Kobasa, 1979; Kobasa, Maddi, & Puccetti, 1982; Maddi & Kobasa, 1984).

The case of Dodge Morgan offers us a chance to understand how hardiness, in terms of commitment, control, and challenge, relates to identity. Most simply stated: Morgan's ability to cope with stress derived from a very well-developed sense of who he was in relation to the world around him.

Commitment is a function of seeing one's self as an integral part of an event, however stressful the event potentially may be. A break in the juncture between "who I am" and "what I'm doing" is a type of vulnerability to stress, and as Maddi and Kobasa (1984) showed, such a disjuncture can lead to illness. This disjuncture, this failure of commitment, may arise in one of two ways: First, if identity is weak or ambiguous, commitment to major life tasks (e.g., work or marriage) may also be weak and a source of distress; second, identity may be strong but not a good fit to the life task at hand.

Morgan's commitment to the voyage was called into question when he was forced to return to Bermuda. This was thus a time of vulnerability to stress; a high level of distress was in fact detected by our test instruments, as previously reported. This vulnerability was a result of his sense of "who I am"—his life story/identity—being profoundly (but temporarily) disturbed, as revealed in this passage:

> I feel like a complete fool. . . . All those years of dreaming. . . . This defeat makes a mockery of my whole life, I feel. . . . (Morgan, 1989, p. 16)

> I am shocked by my reflection in the mirror below. It is not a determined, clear-eyed young adventurer I see but a fifty-three-year-old man the color of despair. What has happened to those years? (Morgan, 1989, p. 15)

Challenge (according to the theory of hardiness) means seeing the potential for self-enhancement in stressful events, and holding open the possibility of eventually redefining one's identity in terms of those events. The ability to find challenge in stressors leads to a channeling of the impinging forces into change or growth rather than into decay or illness. The identity must be flexible enough to bend without breaking. Morgan's framing of the purpose of the voyage over a year before his departure was thus a positive sign with respect to his eventually enduring the stressors of the voyage:

> My place in the customary order of things is secure. But the customary order of things is not enough. . . . I'm not sure I know myself now. . . . How much more is there? It is time to try again to find out. There is so little time left. (Morgan, 1984, p. 4)

The promise script of Morgan's life story clearly shapes the commitment and challenge components of Morgan's hardiness. In a sense, Morgan *was* the *American Promise*, so great was the congruence of identity and task. Therefore, two key potentiators of disablement via stress—i.e., alienation (rather than commitment) and perception of threat (rather than perception of challenge; Maddi & Kobasa, 1984)—were either missing or disarmed. That fact that Morgan deeply identified with the stressful tasks he faced during the voyage allowed him to commit all his physical and psychological resources without being equivocal. Consider Morgan's posture towards his despair at having to return to Bermuda for repairs:

> [It was] without question the most difficult decision I have ever made in my life. . . . The only way I can accept the decision, the only way I can write down the latitude and longitude of Bermuda and plot a course there, is to make myself another *promise*: "You will start again, Dodge. You will start again if you have to row the sonofabitch around," reads my log. (Morgan, 1989, p. 16, emphasis added)

Identity (especially identity strongly influenced by agency) is a potential locus of effective control as well, although control is not

as obviously tied to identity as are the other components of hardiness. We can, however, observe aspects of control rather directly in the case of Morgan's voyage, as a set of distinct behaviors and attitudes that affected his ability to cope with stressors.

Psychological agency is practically synonymous with individual striving for control. Certainly striving for control is common in effective executives. An extreme need for control, however, can be a liability, resulting in such problems as the inability to delegate, rigidity, arrogance, the illusion of control, or a loss of vision within a swamp of detail in attempt to manage "hands on" (Kaplan, 1989). All of these can lead to career derailment (McCall et al., 1988).

We believe Morgan achieved—not without great difficulty—a tempered degree of control that served him well in coping with stressors ranging from monotony to hurricanes. Morgan balanced his strong need for control with a measure of spontaneity and abandon and the occasional surrender of control. This balance allowed for flexibility as well as discipline, broadness of vision as well as attention to detail, the ability (during *American Promise*'s construction) both to delegate effectively and to take charge, and, not the least, a sense of humor.

Morgan's efforts at control were quite effective when applied to planning the voyage. As he said afterwards: "The preparation and research that went into this voyage are unmatched, I have no doubt." As a result of this preparation, which controlled in advance much of his experience aboard the *American Promise*, Morgan was to a considerable degree spared from the stressors of boredom, sleep deprivation, fatigue, and loneliness during the voyage. For example, Morgan's obsessive control over preparing the environment within *American Promise* allowed him to average more than eight hours of sleep in twenty-four, read dozens of books, and take hot showers.

Part of Morgan's planning consisted of soliciting our involvement as psychologists. He was able to effectively include our concerns:

> This information deepened my understanding of the emotional challenge I was undertaking and altered some of my planning. I began paying more heed to those matters that would keep me rested and alert. When we were designing

> *Promise*, I told Ted Hood that I would trade a half knot of speed average for a better night's sleep. (Morgan, 1989, p. 134)

Consider the thoroughness of Morgan's control over stressful aspects of his experience as he writes from his dry quarters during a series of 35-to-40-knot nighttime squalls—ordinarily the very worst of a sailor's sleeping conditions:

> I can nap the ten to fifteen minutes between passing squalls and feel *Promise* bury her leeward shoulder, which gets me up to reef for the heavy wind. As much as this makes a shambles of my night's sleep, I am ever so thankful for my easy-does-it [motorized] roller reefing in both main and jib. . . . I can keep *Promise* moving at 8+ knots and still nap! (personal log, day 128)

As he completed his planning and was actually at sea, however, a lack of control threatened Morgan, and he struggled to find a way to cope. His existence threatened, early on, to become an amorphous gray veil—the kind of tedium which would later almost smother him with its full weight during his mid-Pacific doldrums:

> I cannot avoid the debilitating awareness that five thousand . . . hours . . . at sea await me. If I succeed. One hour is such a helpless thing in that monstrous crowd of time. (personal log, day 2; Morgan, 1989, p. 62)

> I am suspended in space and time. It is like reliving the same day over and over. (personal log, day 15; Morgan, 1989, p. 73)

Morgan had a tendency to be impulsive, sometimes reacting to events in ways that gave him the illusion of control, while in fact putting the entire venture at risk. Kaplan (1989) reports such a tendency as a not-infrequent problem among highly driven executives. On day 28, Morgan loses his temper over the failure of a snapshackle and impulsively climbs the mast after a loose line—nearly losing his life in the process:

> What a day. I am beat up some. When I think about what could have happened, though, acting as I did in a rage and overlooking my wounds along the way, it makes me shiver. The problem isn't an arm badly bruised in two places, a split ear, or a crushed gonad, but the kind of abandoned behavior that makes widows. Unless I'm more careful, the boat may make it to the Southern Ocean but maybe on autopilot and without me. (personal log, day 28; Morgan, 1989, p. 92)

Through trials such as these, Morgan arrived at a more balanced formula for control over both boredom and danger:

> Live one hour at a time; adopt a routine for ordering your life, down to the smallest detail; act immediately on any matter demanding attention; keep busy at all costs. (Morgan, 1989, p. 127)

> The whole world is the next hour. It is something I was driven to by circumstances, but when I realized I was managing to cope in this way, I did it on purpose. (in Knight, 1986)

> The galley becomes showcase clean and organized. The tools are oiled and tidied and the workbench polished. Lines, many lines, get new whippings. . . . Every surface of my little cabin is scrubbed so clean it smells like the inside of a lemon (personal log, day 125; Morgan, 1989, pp. 172-173)

Transitions in the Life Story of Dodge Morgan

When Morgan completed his voyage, his promise was fulfilled. The bold, creative act that represented so much of his adult generativity was over. Morgan's future then lacked an energizing script; for a long while after the voyage he simply drifted among small activities within the harbor of his family. This sense of loss was foreshadowed when Morgan rounded Cape Horn, South America—perhaps the climax of the voyage itself:

> As *American Promise* stretches her wake away from Cape Horn, I am overcome with a solemn mood of nostalgia. The event is over, a memory never to be matched. This goal has for so long beckoned me that we had become friends. And now suddenly my friend is gone. (personal log, day 109; Morgan, 1989, p. 162)

This lost friend was surely a vital piece of himself, a piece of his identity left behind.

Morgan's postvoyage anomie is telling of a more general phenomenon among hard-charging executives who reach the end of their youthful dreams. What happens to the story of "who I am" when its dominant script has been, for better or worse, played out? What does a person do when the voyage of a lifetime is over?

In this section we will consider transitions (i.e., orderly change) of identity in terms of the idea of life review.

Morgan had made life review an explicit objective before the voyage itself had begun when he wrote in "The Skipper Presented":

> My place in the customary order of things is secure. But the customary order of things is not enough. How much more is there? It is time to try again to find out. There is so little time left. (Morgan, 1989, p. 194)

> I'm not sure how well I know myself now. . . . I want to come back knowing myself, if I can, in a deeper way than I do now. I want to find out how competent and persevering I am. I want to plan the next stage of my life. (Morgan, 1984, p. 4)

The sense that "there is so little time left," with its evocation of mortality, bespeaks the seasonal, post midlife, aspect of life review. At the same time, Morgan knew that, in the context of his own agentically themed life story, a severely challenging experience could serve as a specific vessel for the process of life review and that he could (in his words) "find out how competent and persevering I am." He knew of this possibility from a previous challenging experience: His time spent sailing *Coaster* in his early thirties had helped shape the story of his identity (indeed, Morgan made his seminal promise upon selling *Coaster*):

> What I learned about myself from those years aboard *Coaster* formed a very important part of my self-knowledge. I learned how incredibly insignificant each one of us is in the whole realm of things. I learned that the very best each of us can possibly do in our lives is to be true to ourselves first and then to be as positive, as candid, as generous, and as demanding as we can to others within the tiny scope of our existence. . . .
>
> I feel it is time [1983] to revisit that awareness and to retest myself on those basic challenges. (Morgan, 1989, p. 194)

What then, did Morgan learn about himself aboard *American Promise*? One obvious lesson was that he was, after all, very competent and very persevering. One key epiphany occurred as the result of his anguished becalming in the South Pacific:

> It wasn't until quite a bit later that I realized the experience that I was having right then [day 87] was in fact the reason why I had chosen to do it. Because I was close to the edge then. I was having to find new strength somewhere to cope—and that is why I wanted to do this. (in Knight, 1986)

"The edge" is the threat of deep disconfirmation of identity, of failure, even death, threatening to overwhelm Morgan. At the same time, the edge represents the possibility of something new emerging out of the engagement of stressful forces. In another respect, however, we read this as an expression of agency, a test of his mastery

and ability to achieve: the same old Dodge. What, if anything, was new?

Part of Morgan's epiphany did include something that feels new to us as we "read" the life story of his identity. The lessons of his experience include a painful awareness of the extent of his agentic isolation and an incipient desire for communion:

> I have never been good at direct expressions of love in any of its forms. Don't have the skill. I think I can express love indirectly as in the show of respect, an action for the welfare of another, time given, bragging about one to others, but these are not recognized as expressions of love. . . . I have, in fact, felt much alone for most of my life—not unloved, simply alone. And so I have felt that I must and will cope with life without any help from others. (personal log, day 125; Morgan, 1989, p. 173)

> I won't change much at this stage of my life, I know, but I do understand these feelings about love, and recognize them better after this time alone. I do know that love is more important than anything, when once I did not. I do know I am capable of love, when once I thought I was not. I do know I yearn to return to those I love, when once I left them for myself. (personal log, day 125; Morgan, 1989, p. 174)

> The result was of course that there was an intensified love for anything living, from plankton to people. Any sign of life was a joy for me. A bird, a visit by dolphins, was a tremendously uplifting thing. Here were other living companions in life. I felt at one with all these living things out there, and there were too few of them. I really do know that I am not a competent hermit. I am a social animal. (in Knight, 1986)

Agency has always had a matter-of-fact quality within Morgan's identity, while communion has been a matter of mystery and, quite frequently, difficulty (e.g., a failed first marriage, his often solitary voyage on the *Coaster*, and the deep tensions engendered within his family because of his risky circumnavigation). As we see here, themes of communion emerged powerfully and (for Morgan) unexpectedly during the voyage of *American Promise*.

Morgan was engaged in an adventure that is the epitome of aloneness; paradoxically he found himself beginning, perhaps, to move out of that aloneness. Was this a real transition toward communion? It is, after all, not too surprising that a man completely alone for 150 days would ruminate about his desire for the company of his loved ones, or indeed for any signs of life. In support of the transition hypothesis, Morgan's psychometric profile four months after the voyage shows an increase in socialization (an aspect of communion) and a decrease in achievement motivation, independence, and tough poise (aspects of agency).

Three years after the voyage, in 1989, we found him finishing his book about the voyage and contemplating joining the environmental movement (but expressly not as a "prime mover"). The latter desire, he says, was a direct outcome of the empathy for life he experienced during the voyage. To the frustration of his business friends, he had shown no desire to jump back into their world, preferring to spend his time at what they referred to as "women's teas," i.e., fund-raisers and charity events.

Morgan expressed his sense of drift in rather agentic terms:

> The whole voyage, all the planning and then the doing of it, was a great big punch that I threw from the depths of my soul. But a punch thrown like that doesn't stop when it lands. So it kept going and going until the follow-through was spent. That punch is finished now. I have yet to lift the other fist. (personal communication, 1989)

What can we conclude about Morgan's (possible) identity transition? His Dream has been fulfilled; his agency has attenuated for the time being. A desire for greater communion has been expressed and has a place in his life story vis-à-vis the lessons of his voyage. Rebalancing agency and communion is difficult, however (Kegan, 1982); the outcome for Morgan is uncertain. A new script has not clearly emerged; no striking new promises have been made. Bridges (1980) points out that an extended period of chaos—of "not this, not that" is typical in transitions; Morgan may simply need more time to resolve his identity. The last quotation given above might, in fact, be called a "transition script," complete with an implicit promise: "I have yet to lift the other fist."

What might this "other fist" look like? We have two competing hypotheses to offer: (1) In executing the voyage, Morgan may have only temporarily exhausted his agentic drive. He needed a rest in the safe harbor of his family. The longing for others he expressed during the voyage may have simply been a passing, and quite understandable, loneliness. The next long stage of his life may also be primarily agentic and find him pursuing more of the same: achievement, independence, and self-expansion at the expense of intimate relationships. We would thus expect to find high agency and low communion both within his personality profile and within his continuing life story/identity. (2) On the other hand, we have pointed to his opportunity for a rebalancing toward communion and a substantially new, communal theme for his identity. The evidence is so far consistent with at least some movement in that direction. We will see: A five-year follow-up of this case is planned, during which time these hypotheses will be explored.

Implications for Executives

We have seen how the basis for the performance of driven, independent people is more than simply a loosely bound cluster of discrete behaviors. Executive performance then can be seen as founded upon executive identity, shaped (most typically) by the volatile motivation we have called agency. We have seen how identity develops over time, as a life story, in conjunction with tasks faced in the world as well as in conjunction with the "seasons of life." Most importantly, we have seen how these tasks, agency, and identity can serve to mutually support and define one another.

We believe there is merit in pursuing the practical implications of these ideas for designing programs aimed at executive development.

Life Review as a Developmental Process

The concept of life review—reflecting upon, elaborating, editing, and extending one's life story—is key to any application of these ideas. As we have pointed out, both experiential and seasonal periods of opportunity exist for this kind of developmental work. The appropriateness, and potency, for identity development during any such period is of course a matter of individual context. Although intervention by a professional facilitator may be quite valuable, caution and deference must be used when inquiring after something so central and, perhaps, precious as one's personal identity.

Communion as an Emergent Motivational Theme

We have suggested that communion can be a potentially emergent motivational theme in executive identity. As Drath (in press) argues, the chorus of demand for greater teamwork, participative management, empowerment, etc. may well be beyond simple behavior change and in the realm of "character development." The

season of midlife, for example, may thus represent an organizational opportunity for addressing difficult relatedness issues in the workplace (as well as in the individual).

Executive Storytelling

Executives tend to use propositional modes of cognition quite heavily, as a part of the analytical world of doing business. The same modes, we have observed, tend to be extended to the representation of their own identities. Propositional modes (which are abstract in character), if overused, can lead to an identity that underrepresents the role of emotion, the richness and complexities of life experiences and of relationships, and the possibilities for the self in the future. We offer the narrative perspective as a natural (since everyone has a life story) corrective.

Practically speaking, how does one engage an executive (or any person) in a narrative exploration of his or her identity, particularly if that person's autobiographical style is more that of "analyzer" than "narrator"? Dodge Morgan, after all, is an avid journalist (after a fashion) within a variety of media. What are the comparable self-identifying and self-exploratory media of the executive? We have observed that executives tend to overuse a kind of dry, propositional categorization in conveying their identities—a means of conveyance with certain limitations. The first author, in his ongoing collaborative work at the Center (e.g., Kaplan, 1991), has used a variety of methods to break this analytic mind-set.

One such method is as follows. A group of executives, who have all participated in a program of psychological testing, biographical self-exploration, and intensive co-worker feedback, are asked to write a particular kind of autobiographical story. This story must be written in the third person, about an imaginary character—but at the same time must incorporate the essences and origins of personal issues they have uncovered in our program. The main character of the story is thus not literally the author but, rather, a metaphorical double who inhabits a metaphorical script and world. A period of freewriting is used to overcome writer's block; the author writes for a period of twenty minutes without

stopping, writing simply whatever comes out, trivial or profound, without lifting the pen. The result of the freewrite is then edited as desired by its author and read to the rest of the group. The group discusses the issues of the story, with reference to the imaginary character rather than the actual author, while the author is silent. The author is allowed to comment at the end of this process.

These stories are produced rather easily, typically with substantial creativity, power, and complexity. This ease of production (in a corporate environment no less) is supportive of the part of our thesis that says narrative is a basic mode of cognition and that identity is naturally compatible with narrative structures and processes.

The stories produced in this way have run the gamut from thinly veiled autobiography to fables populated by personified animals or even machines. What is compelling is that the embodied personal themes stand out rather boldly and they readily become subject to serious and empathic analysis by the group. Part of the reason for this is that the themes are often more universal than personal and frequently touch nerves in the listeners. These stories are at once a medium of discretion, where one can hide if need be, as well as a powerful medium to surface and share essential aspects of one's identity. New possibilities for enacting one's story often arise. Our hunch is that, although these are not life stories per se, identity is in fact very close to the surface in these third-person narratives in the form of basic scripts, ideologies, key experiences, motive themes, resolved versus unresolved elements, etc. Research, of course, will be required to bear this out.

Notes

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[1]Unlike typical practice with case studies, the details here have not been disguised. Morgan has chosen to make his case public, and this paper follows a documentary film (Knight, 1986) and an autobiographical book about the voyage (Morgan, 1989). Morgan has endorsed our research efforts, including undisguised publication, and in spite of our professional preferences for discretion, it would seem futile to write about him anonymously.

[2]Erikson has often been misunderstood, since his first use of the term *generativity* in 1950, to be referring only to the establishment and guidance of the next generation. He has, however, made the fuller meanings of the term quite clear: "There are individuals who, through misfortune or because of special and genuine gifts, do not apply this drive [only] to their own offspring" (Erikson, 1950, p. 267); and "generativity encompasses procreativity, productivity, and creativity, and thus the generation of new beings as well as new products and ideas, including a kind of self-generation concerned with further identity development" (Erikson, 1982, p. 67).

[3]Levinson (1978) used the word *season* to apply to his age-specific model of periods of transition and stability over the life span. We use the word in the more general sense; that is, without necessarily holding to Levinson's specified transition ages.

[4]The timing of a midlife season has been much debated. From our perspective there is great individual and circumstantial variation. For example, Morgan's success at his endeavors (perhaps like other successful executives) meant that the culmination of his script was not complete until age fifty-four. It is thus still appropriate to speak of Morgan's issues in terms of a midlife transition.

[5]The technical details and results of this research project will be reported in full elsewhere (Palus, Nasby, & Easton, in preparation).

[6]Days are hereafter numbered with departure from Bermuda as day 1. Much of his personal log is reprinted in Morgan (1989, pp. 61-190).

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Appendix

The nine elements of the complete life-story model, most recently articulated by McAdams (1990), are shown below (in abstract), illustrated by Dodge Morgan's life story.

Narrative tone refers to the degree of optimism versus pessimism that consistently undergirds the life story. Narrative tone is established as a product of infant attachment. Secure infant attachment breeds trust and a life-long attitude of hope (Bowlby, 1969); this is manifest in the life story as optimism.

Thus, we can begin to characterize Morgan's life story as primarily optimistic in tone.

Early childhood images are story fragments and images encountered in childhood, acquired from, for example, fairy tales, movies, and early experiences. These images provide raw materials for adult identity.

Morgan's childhood was rich in sailing images and in images of hard-driving, independent men.

Ideological setting refers to the abstract worldview which grounds the life story, first appearing in adolescence with the advent of formal operational thinking (Piaget, 1926). These include political, religious, and moral ideologies (whether implicit or explicit).

Morgan's ideology is perhaps best summed up in his life-long belief that "all progress comes from individual action."

Motive themes are the basic clusters of motivation underlying the life story: agency and communion. Any life story may be seen as high or low in either or both of these motives.

Agency is the dominant theme of Morgan's life story, and communion is the emergent theme.

Nuclear episodes are highly memorable experiences which provide the story with dramatic or pivotal scenes; these carry special meaning in the form of new lessons or reinforcements of earlier lessons. Nuclear episodes can represent change—as a turning point in identity and continuity—or affirm identity.

Among the nuclear episodes of Morgan's identity are the voyage of the *Coaster*, the purchase of his fledgling electronics business, and the voyage of *American Promise*.

Imagos are personifications of the self which serve as the main characters of the life story. Multiple imagos are possible, often inhabiting distinct substories, representing complementary, divergent, or even conflicting aspects of identity.

Morgan's imagos include the Sailor, the Entrepreneur, and the Family Man (our labels).

Scripts are plans or outlines for parts of the story, descriptive of a story already lived, and yet to be lived. In adulthood, scripts frequently and ideally (according to McAdams, 1990) center on generativity: that which one creates or gives back to the world.

The most visible and influential script in Morgan's life is one we have labeled "promise."

Narrative complexity refers to the degree to which the life story is simply and sparsely constituted (in terms of the other elements in this model) versus complexly and densely constituted.

Morgan's life story appears fairly rich, having, for example, several imagos and many nuclear episodes, and thus may be rated as moderately complex.

Life review is the process of reflecting on the story in order to give it explicit form, clarify it, revise it, or simply enjoy it. Life review typically occurs around major transitions, in old age, or as part of a deliberate attempt to change behavior (such as therapy).

Morgan has engaged in an extended review as part of the voyage; he explicitly viewed the voyage as an opportunity to clarify and fulfill his identity.

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We accomplish our mission through research, training, and publication—with emphasis on the widespread, innovative application of the behavioral sciences to the challenges facing the leaders of today and tomorrow.

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